

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES.

FEBRUARY 2, 1860.—Ordered to be printed.

MR. HALE made the following

REPORT.

[To accompany Bill S. 30.]

The Committee on Post Offices and Post Roads, to whom was referred the petition of Sheldon McKnight, praying additional compensation for carrying the mails on the Cleveland, Detroit, and Lake Superior routes, from the year 1848 to the present time, have had the same under consideration, and beg leave to report:

The petitioner alleges that he transported, at the request of the postmasters and agents of the Post Office Department, the United States mail, in steamboats, between Cleveland, Ohio, and Detroit, Michigan, and the several ports on Lake Huron and Lake Superior, from the year 1848 up to the present time, during the season of navigation, for which service he has not received adequate compensation, and he therefore prays that Congress will allow him a fair and equitable remuneration for said service.

The evidence before the committee is clear and satisfactory of the faithful and efficient character of the service rendered by the petitioner, and that it was undertaken and performed at the request of the officials having charge of the mails.

The most satisfactory evidence of the performance of the service is to be found in the testimony of Captains S. W. Turner, John Wilson, and R. S. Ryder, confirmed by lengthy affidavits of John Senter, Michael Duffy, Daniel Pitman, A. S. Williams, Peter White, M. M. Williams, postmasters; and John Griswold, James Mercer, R. S. Graveraet, and Henry J. Buckley, shipping merchants and business men at the different points along the route of this service. This evidence, coming from men of character and experience, fully conversant with all the facts connected with the transportation of the mails on this route, and competent to judge of the inadequacy of the compensation allowed the petitioner for said service, the committee are disposed to place the fullest reliance thereon as substantiating the facts alleged by the petitioner.

The evidence being somewhat voluminous, the committee will not burden the Senate with its full publication, as it would probably occupy many pages of printed matter, but will solicit its attention to

the very explicit affidavit of Captain John Wilson, appended to this report, marked Exhibit A.

All the witnesses concur in the opinion set forth at length by Captain Wilson, that the petitioner, who was the pioneer in the steam-boat service of the northwestern lakes, having performed the service of mail contractor at a time and under circumstances of great hazard to life and property, ought to receive compensation proportionate to the service rendered and danger incurred.

Captain Redmond S. Ryder, who has had eighteen years' experience in navigation of the lakes, corroborates the statement of Captain Wilson, and mentions numerous instances of the mails being carried by land at the petitioner's expense during boisterous periods of the year when a landing could not be effected by his boats at various points of mail distribution. Other witnesses testify that the petitioner's vessels have been detained for hours at points where a landing could only be effected by small boats at great risk, when it was not incumbent upon the petitioner to incur that danger, he being actuated only by a desire to accommodate the inhabitants of an isolated portion of the country, and the hope of eventually receiving a proper remuneration through the representations of the local postmasters at whose solicitation the service was performed.

The following extract of a letter from Mr. Dundas, Second Assistant Postmaster General, to the petitioner, dated January 26, 1859, contains an acknowledgment of valuable services rendered the department by the petitioner.

"As regards your intercourse with the department, in performing mail service and in furthering the mail facilities upon the upper lakes, it is only simple justice to state that your efforts in that direction have been meritorious and of an honorable character, and that you have in some instances been of *great service* to the department in effecting the mail facilities for that upper country."

Further evidence exhibits the losses sustained by the petitioner in steamboats and propellers by various casualties upon the upper lakes, amounting in the aggregate to \$130,000, the greater part of which is irretrievable, owing to the impossibility of effecting insurance after the 20th of November.

The committee are satisfied, from all the evidence in the case, that the service for which compensation is sought was actually and faithfully performed; that the interests of a large and active business community, engaged in the development of an important source of national wealth, required the performance of the service rendered by the petitioner, and for which he has not received any adequate compensation.

The only compensation received by the petitioner for the entire service was what was paid him by the postmasters on the route for carrying the local mails at the nominal compensation of one cent each for letters, and half a cent each for newspapers; which mails formed but a small part of the entire mail transported by him. The larger portion of the mail was what is commonly known as the "through mail," for the transportation of which no compensation whatever was allowed.

The present compensation for this service under contract is one hun-

dred dollars per round trip, a distance of twenty-two hundred miles, which is probably the cheapest service in the United States, which your committee believe should be awarded to the petitioner for his services; and they report a bill accordingly, and recommend its passage.

EXHIBIT "A."

STATE OF MICHIGAN, *Wayne County*, ss:

I, John Wilson, of lawful age, being duly sworn, depose and say: That my occupation is that of a mariner; that I have been engaged in said business on the northwest lakes for 21 years; that I have acted in the capacity of master for 13 years; am well acquainted with Sheldon McKnight and his Lake Superior line of steamers, and know that the affidavit of J. T. Whiting, with the accompanying schedules A and B, exhibiting the number of steamers belonging to McKnight and employed on the Lake Superior route, as also the exhibit of the number of steamers lost, to be a true and correct statement; that I was employed by said Sheldon McKnight in the capacity of master during the season of 1851, having charge of the Monticello until her loss at Misery bay, on Lake Superior, and in 1852 of the steamer Baltimore; that I assisted in the hauling of said steamers over the land, distant one mile around the Falls of St. Mary; that I sailed for said McKnight during the season of 1855, 1856, and 1857, as master of the steamer Illinois, and know that she run regularly between Cleveland, Detroit, and Lake Superior. I am well acquainted with the navigation from Cleveland to Superior City, and state that it is the most perilous and difficult of all the other lake routes with which I am acquainted; that the expense of running steamers on said Lake Superior route is about one-fourth greater than on the other lake routes; that I am well acquainted with the manner of delivering the United States mails on Lake Superior, having carried the mail on said lake; and I state that, from the insufficiency of the harbors on Lake Superior and the roughness of the lake, and the frequency of being compelled to land the mails at night and in open boats, remaining off shore with the steamer, the mail service is not only difficult, but peculiarly dangerous and hazardous; and I further state that frequently, having had to run by various ports from stress of weather, I have sent back the United States mails, overland, at considerable expense to the steamer.

And I further state, from my own personal knowledge, that said McKnight's line of steamers have carried regularly the United States mail since the year 1849, myself having observed the said mail going on and off of his boats since that period; and I furthermore state that, owing to the extra insurance on boats running on this route, as well as the impossibility of obtaining insurance risk after the 20th of November, the value of the service performed in carrying the United States mail on the said route is not less than \$125 per round trip from Cleveland and Detroit to Sault Ste. Marie, and \$200 per round trip from Cleveland and Detroit to Ontonagon, Superior City, and La Pointe.

I say the above from the fullest knowledge of the expense, danger, and trouble attending the navigation of said route.

J. WILSON.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this seventeenth day of December, A. D. 1858.

DE GARMO J. WHITING.

Notary Public, Wayne County, Michigan.

STATE OF MICHIGAN, *County of Wayne, ss:*

I, Enos T. Throop, clerk of said county, and clerk of the circuit court for the county of Wayne, do hereby certify that De Garmo J. Whiting, whose name is subscribed to the jurat of the annexed instrument, and therein written, was, at the time of taking such jurat, a notary public in and for said county, duly commissioned and qualified, and duly authorized to take the same; and further, that I am well acquainted with the handwriting of such notary public, and verily believe that the signature to the said jurat is genuine.

In testimony whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed the seal of said court and county, at Detroit, this 17th day of
[L. s.] September, A. D. 1858.

E. T. THROOP, *Clerk.*